

The University of Chicago

THE IDEAL OF POVERTY IN FRANCIS  
OF ASSISI

A PART OF A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO THE  
FACULTY OF THE DIVINITY SCHOOL IN CANDIDACY  
FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

DEPARTMENT OF CHURCH HISTORY

1932

By  
RAY C. PETRY

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## CHAPTER II

### FRANCIS' IMITATION OF THE POOR CHRIST AND OF GOSPEL POVERTY

#### A. Introduction to Francis' Ideal of Poverty

Francis of Assisi<sup>1</sup> was not the first to dream of the realization of the daring ideal of poverty. Christian history

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<sup>1</sup>Francis of Assisi was born in 1182 of middle class parentage. He acquired a fragmentary education and entered business with his father, who was a cloth merchant. In the meantime he exercised leadership over a group of boisterous companions.

Turned from his boyish dreams of chivalry and military glory by illness and a series of spiritual experiences, he finally renounced inheritance and all else for a life of utter poverty (1206). By 1210 his career of Gospel renunciation was well under way. In that year he received from Innocent III verbal approval for his simple gospel rule, drawn up for the guidance of his own poverty life and that of eleven voluntary associates.

After some ten years of poverty apostolate and of numerous missionary projects, among which was a preaching trip to Egypt, he preached before the Curia and secured, with papal approval, cardinal Ugolini's protectorship of the order of friars (1220). At the Chapter of Saint Michael he resigned his active leadership of the order, and, as a private brother, acknowledged Peter di Catana as Vicar, or, in reality, as minister-general.

In 1220-21 Francis, with the collaboration of Caesar of Speyer, produced the impassioned document known as the First Rule, or the Rule of 1221. Not until it had been radically altered to meet the institutional needs of church and order, did it really become a rule. It received papal approval as the definitive rule in 1223.

In 1224 Francis underwent a spiritual transformation declared to be that of the Stigmata. In 1226 he died at the Portiuncula, leaving behind in his last will the bequest of absolute poverty which had so enriched him. He was canonized July 16, 1228.

For modern biographies and interpretations of St. Francis, see, P. Sabatier, Life of St. Francis of Assisi, tr. from the French by L. S. Houghton (New York, 1917); L. Salvatorelli, The Life of St. Francis of Assisi (New York, 1928);

(Footnote concluded on following page)

recorded countless protests against adherence to conventional economic practice. Marked popularity was accorded those eleventh and twelfth century movements which sought to revive evangelical poverty and to restore primitive Christianity.<sup>1</sup>

Francis' ideal cannot be divorced entirely from the dreams of many sincere exponents of poverty who preceded him. He was spiritually akin to those who sought primarily to follow Christ and observe the gospels in literal exactitude.<sup>2</sup>

Yet Francis cannot properly be represented as having merely borrowed and re-expressed an ideal whose qualities were already fashioned, whose ultimate connections with reform were already a certainty. On the contrary, he was but indirectly influenced by previous movements to inculcate poverty idealism.<sup>3</sup>

The "Poverello" came to spiritual maturity in a religious environment upon which the professions of monastic poverty had lessening influence. The voluntary association which

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J. Jørgensen, St. Francis of Assisi: A Biography (New York, 1912, 1926); M. Beaufreton, Saint François d'Assisi (2 ed., Paris, 1925); P. Gratien, Histoire de la fondation & de l'évolution de l'ordre des frères mineurs au XIII<sup>e</sup> siècle (Paris, 1928).

<sup>1</sup>E. S. Davison, The Forerunners of St. Francis (Boston and New York, 1927), p. 7.

<sup>2</sup>G. Schnürer, Kirche und Kultur im Mittelalter (Paderborn, 1924), II, 343; K. Balthasar, Geschichte des Armutsstreits im Franziskanerorden bis zum Konzil von Vienne (Münster, 1911), p. 6; H. Felder, Die Ideale des hl. Franz von Assisi (Paderborn, 1923), p. 104.

<sup>3</sup>Schnürer, op. cit., II, 343.



he incited to the practice of complete renunciation had few characteristics of a monastic order. Francis gave a living definition of gospel poverty which was most uncompromising in its conformity to the life of the naked Christ. His ideal was intimately associated with the sufferings of poor men. The nature and intensity of his devotion to poverty was at wide variance with the comfortable idealism of individual monks who enjoyed corporate resources at a safe distance from human woes.<sup>1</sup>

"The Poor Man of Assisi" taught his followers a life of poverty which went beyond the mere expropriation of the individual. His ideal demanded the further repudiation of possessions in common. The monastic acknowledgment of community property had resulted in the betrayal of all but nominal poverty. Francis, and those who dared to follow him, cast off irrevocably every sustaining resource in money, revenues, and lands. Fixed habitations and stored provisions were foreign to them while the spirit of true poverty predominated.<sup>2</sup>

The Apostles had carried the Gospel to the world with only such support as their own labors and the gifts of their hearers had provided. Francis was prepared to undertake a

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<sup>1</sup>S. J. Turner, The Vow of Poverty (Washington, D. C., 1929), p. 23.

<sup>2</sup>P. Gratien, Histoire de la fondation & de l'évolution de l'ordre des frères mineurs au XIII<sup>e</sup> siècle (Paris, 1928), p. 59.

like apostolate without added resources.<sup>1</sup> He was determined to possess nothing at all, and he forbore the use of material things as much as possible. In order that outer poverty might be something more than a transparent veil revealing inner riches, he sought to ground his own renunciation and that of his followers in profoundest poverty of spirit. The excision of outer wealth had always to be preceded by the more fundamental removal of the possessive will. The man who scorned external possessions, because temporal lusts had been atrophied within, could bring to the disinherited of earth the joy of a free soul, unfettered by material environment.<sup>2</sup>

The followers of Francis were contemptuous of the wealth which condemned the monastic orders to fixed abodes, selfishly withdrawn from human need.<sup>3</sup> The Franciscans pursued their gospel pilgrimage over every thoroughfare of human traffic. Out of their contemplative regard for the poverty of Christ grew an apostolate to the poor whom he loved. By their own utter poverty without want, the sons of St. Francis raised the poorest of men above the despair of material destitution.

In spite of the ascetic fires which purged him, Francis

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<sup>1</sup>J. Jørgensen, St. Francis of Assisi: A Biography (New York, 1912, 1926), pp. 91-92.

<sup>2</sup>Davison, op. cit., p. 6; Gratien, op. cit., p. 52; Felder, op. cit., p. 126.

<sup>3</sup>For the contrast between monastic and Franciscan ideals see Gratien, op. cit., p. 59; V. D. Scudder, The Franciscan Adventure (New York, 1931), pp. 29-35.



saw and helped others to see the beauty of life and nature, which Providence extended without price. He could not adore, in its purity, the poverty of his Christ, until he shared to the uttermost the poverty of Christ's poor.<sup>1</sup> He made of poverty the very foundation of his own life and that of his spiritual family.<sup>2</sup> His love for it grew steadily as his soul expanded in fellowship with the Master.<sup>3</sup>

Francis embraced the ideal of poverty for reasons which transcended idealistic protests against ecclesiastical worldliness.<sup>4</sup> He had nothing in common with those who capitalized poverty sentiment to precipitate an attack on the institutions of the church. Much as he may have desired the liberation of church and society from the bondage of temporal things, he was no rebel against existing institutions. He never shirked the responsibility of denouncing "man's inhumanity to man." It is a mistake, however, to picture him as a social reformer with a systematic program for which the practical implications of poverty had been exactly calculated.<sup>5</sup>

Francis' naive, intuitive sense of the real set a high value upon poverty as a beautiful ideal aside from its instru-

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<sup>1</sup>Scudder, op. cit., p. 35.

<sup>2</sup>Gratien, op. cit., p. 45.

<sup>3</sup>D. H. S. Nicholson, The Mysticism of St. Francis of Assisi (London, 1923), p. 133.

<sup>4</sup>Davison, op. cit., p. 18.

<sup>5</sup>P. Sabatier, "L'originalité de Saint François d'Assise," P. Sabatier, (ed.) Franciscan Essays, p. 3; L. Salvatorelli, The Life of St. Francis of Assisi (New York, 1928), p. 152.

mental significance.<sup>1</sup> It was for him both a means and an end. It was a means to moral perfection and a higher discipline of life. Personalized as a beautiful, noble woman, as the spouse of Christ and the Queen of all virtues, poverty was for Francis a radiant being of ineffable charm. It was at once a precious pearl and an object of ardent love.<sup>2</sup> However Francis never considered poverty wholly apart from the life of humanity and the love of God. The beauty which made poverty dear to her Assisan admirer, was the comeliness of an ideal made flesh among men. Poverty was not a means in the sense of a transient, subsidiary agency impersonally employed in Francis' program. He did find in it a heavenly means to the attainment of freedom, joy, and spiritual power. It was a most efficacious means to the attainment of divine communion.<sup>3</sup>

In fine, Francis embraced poverty, primarily, not because of its disciplinary qualities, nor because of its value as a convenient slogan in reform, but because it was the sacred state of the Christ life which he sought literally to

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<sup>1</sup>L. L. Dubois, St. Francis of Assisi: Social Reformer (Washington, D. C., 1904), pp. 95-96.

<sup>2</sup>Dubois, op. cit., pp. 95-96; P. Ubald D'Alençon, "L'Ame Franciscaine," Revue de Philosophie XXI (1912), pp. 292-293.

<sup>3</sup>Nicholson, op. cit., p. 120; E. Underhill, The Mystics of the Church (New York, 1926), pp. 91-92; R. Schmitz, Der Zustand der süddeutschen Franziskaner-Konventualen am Ausgang des Mittelalters (Düsseldorf, 1914), p. 66.

imitate.<sup>1</sup> He was not thinking of inaugurating a reform, nor was he interested in founding a new order. He was intent on sanctifying himself personally through the imitation of Christ.<sup>2</sup>

It was likewise Francis' desire to transform the sons, whom God gave him, into observers of the Gospel, zealous for the salvation of souls. From all those who would follow him in the Christ's earthly life of love and suffering, Francis demanded absolute renunciation of all possessions and the humble service of lepers. Their simple, popular preaching and their lives of conformity to the Gospel were to be such that men would gladly hear them.<sup>3</sup>

Francis had faith in the power of poverty to free men from the distractions and penalties which property imposed. He accorded Dame Poverty the devotion of a knightly soul. Above all, however, his attachment to poverty proceeded from a passionate desire to follow in all of its implications the example of Christ.<sup>4</sup>

The imitator of the Christ did not seek in poverty a fanatic's release from dull normality, nor did he offer through poverty an ascetic's advance payment on the ransom

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<sup>1</sup>Dubois, op. cit., pp. 97-98; Gratien, op. cit., pp. 28, 31, 46; Salvatorelli, op. cit., pp. 92-93.

<sup>2</sup>Gratien, op. cit., p. 28; H. Holzapfel, Handbuch der Geschichte des Franziskanerordens (Freiburg, 1902), pp. 12-13.

<sup>3</sup>Gratien, op. cit., pp. 31, 33.

<sup>4</sup>Nicholson, op. cit., p. 133.



from hell. Poverty was for him "an essential means for the reproduction of the life of Christ, for the celebration of the will of God on earth and the advent of His Kingdom."<sup>1</sup> Attaining to that poverty which Jacopone da Todi declared was 'naught to have, and nothing to desire, and all things to possess in the spirit of liberty,' Francis approximated to a degree the stature of Christ, whose perfect imitator he sought to be.<sup>2</sup> Endeavoring constantly to follow the Christ, he was led to realize, almost unaware, the perfection of his own personality.<sup>3</sup> Intent on the program of Galilee, he was transfigured in poverty. He it was whom Renan could term the only perfect Christian since Jesus, a perfect mirror of Christ.<sup>4</sup>

#### B. The Evolution of Francis' Ideal and the Imitation of Christ's Poverty

Francis' transition from a gay, irresponsible boyhood to the maturity of a poor life was definitely accelerated by the impress, upon his very being, of Christ's life of poverty.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Salvatorelli, op. cit., pp. 92-93.

<sup>2</sup>Underhill, op. cit., p. 92.

<sup>3</sup>Sabatier, Franciscan Essays, p. 1.

<sup>4</sup>E. Renan, Nouvelles études d'histoire religieuse (Paris, 1884), pp. 334-335. Cf. J. H. Randall, The Making of the Modern Mind (Boston, 1927), p. 72.

<sup>5</sup>Jørgensen, op. cit., p. 15; Cf. Vita (Legenda) Prima de Thomas de Celano, 1. This source is cited hereafter in abbreviated form as I Cel., 1, the Roman numeral indicating the Vita Prima, the Arabic numeral referring to the numbering according to the Alençon edition. The Vita (Legenda) Secunda de Thomas de Celano is cited as II Cel., 10 etc. Both the Vita Prima and the Vita Secunda are included in the edition of (Footnote concluded on the following page)

In the midst of youthful vanities he could never shake off a vague disquietude at the thought of the poor. As an apprentice in his father's business, he was unable to disregard those who besought alms in the name of God. There was even then in his character a substratum of gentle susceptibility to human need and divine love.<sup>1</sup> Legendary accounts credit

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P. Edward Alençon, entitled *S. Francisci Assisiensis Vita et Miracula Additis Opusculis Liturgicis Auctore Tr. Thoma de Celano* (Romae, 1906). For a good translation based upon the Alençon edition see: A. G. Ferrers Howell, *The Lives of St. Francis of Assisi by Brother Thomas of Celano* (London, 1908).

The two Lives of Francis by Celano constitute most invaluable source materials for the life of the Saint.

The First Life, written c. 1228-29, was supplemented c. 1244-47 by the Second, which profited from new information made available concerning Francis, and from Celano's association with intimate friends of the "Poverello."

The sources which lie behind the first work are not definitely known. Celano's presentation reveals the qualities of a generally trustworthy author of some historical ability. The Second Life is based, in large part at least, on sources which reflect faithfully Francis' true spirit. Brother Leo and other companions may have collaborated with Celano in writing this work.

For critical evaluation of these sources and the complex problems therewith involved see: Sabatier's "Critical Study of the Sources" in the *Life*, pp. 349-432, especially pp. 365-69; 385-89; Van Ortoy in *Analecta Bollandiana* XIX, 140-141; Goetz, "Die Quellen Zur Geschichte des hl. Franz von Assisi," in *Zeitschrift für Kirchengeschichte* XXIV, especially 166-197; 475-477; Beaufreton, *St. François*, pp. 268-274; F. C. Burkitt, "The Study of the Sources of the Life of St. Francis," in W. W. Seton (ed.) *St. Francis of Assisi: 1226-1926, Essays in Commemoration* (London, 1926), pp. 15-61, especially pp. 52-53; A. G. Little, "The Sources of the History of St. Francis of Assisi," *English Historical Review* XVII (1902), 643-77; H. Boehmer, *Analekten Zur Geschichte des Franciscus von Assisi* (Tübingen u. Leipzig, 1904), LXIII, LXV. This last named work also supplies the critical texts of Francis' own writings and of important fragments closely related to them.

<sup>1</sup>Sabatier, *Life*, p. 10. Cf. S. Bonaventurae *Legenda* (Maior) S. Francisci, I, 1. This source is hereafter abbreviated.  
(Footnote concluded on following page)

him with having given generous alms long before his conversion. Perhaps he was stung into charitable action by the contrast between his pointless munificence to fellow revelers and his previous failure to give bounties to God's poor.<sup>1</sup>

viated as Bon., I, 1, etc., the Roman numeral referring to chapter, the Arabic number to paragraph according to the Quaracchi edition. The *Legenda* is a part of the work entitled, *Seraphici Doctoris S. Bonaventurae Legendae Duae De Vita S. Francisci Seraphici Editae A. PP. Collegii S. Bonaventurae. Nova Impressio* (Quaracchi, 1923). For a translation of this legend see: *The Life of St. Francis*, tr. by E. Gurney Salter, Everyman's Library No. 485 (London, 1910).

Bonaventura's "*Legenda Maior*," written in 1263 to compose the differences and induce harmony within the order, has many of the faults of an official biography. He attempted a compilation of most diverse materials, indefatigably gathered, from which all references thought potential for acrimonious discussion had been excised. His hero, whom he represented as a great miracle-working saint, lost some of the spontaneous characteristics of his very real humanity.

There is, in Bonaventura, however, a suggestive treatment of Francis' inner life of devotion in relation to humility, obedience, poverty, and associated virtues. When used in connection with less hampered accounts, this work has real value. It emphasizes constantly Francis' conformity to the Christ.

For critical evaluations see Sabatier, *Life*, pp. 391-398; Beaufreton, *op. cit.*, pp. 274-81; Burkitt, *op. cit.*; Little, *op. cit.*, pp. 650-51; Gratien, *op. cit.*, XVII-XVIII.

<sup>1</sup>Cf. the *Legenda trium sociorum*, 3, in *Acta Sanctorum*, Octobris Tomus Secundus (A SS, Oct. t. II, 723-42). The Legend is abbreviated as *Tres Socii* or *Tres Soc.*

This source, considered so highly by Sabatier, and accepted by him as the work of Leo and other companions, written in 1246, has subsequently been shown to be a late compilation drawn from Celano, Julian of Speyer, and other sources. Though most defective as a portrayal of the whole character of Francis, it does fill in certain aspects of his life. It may not be totally devoid of historical value, for it seems to have drawn, for some of its tales, not upon Celano directly, but upon reminiscences consulted by him also. Though much more of a panegyric on poverty than a history in any real sense, it is not the worthless piece it is sometimes held to be. From it may be gleaned some precious suggestions, some

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Exaggerated dreams of troubadour gallantry and military glory led to his participation in a Perugian war and one subsequent campaign. Out of the maze of romantic fancy, depressing illness, and mental unrest, surcharged with mystic stimuli, the shadowy image of his poverty ideal began to emerge. The old material resources for inducing sensory delight were drawn from wells too shallow to supply happiness. When the associations of wealth and luxury offered naught but harsh irritants to his soul, the company of gracious poverty ennobled his life and endowed him with spiritual delights.<sup>1</sup>

As Francis sustained more intimate relations with the Christ, his own ego and its temporal supports were visibly shaken. He began a voluntary, though gradual, withdrawal from secular affairs while he treasured up the Christ in his inner man.<sup>2</sup> Having found a priceless pearl, he did not hesitate to sell all else he possessed in an attempt to secure it. The beginning of spiritual merchandise he sought in the contempt of the world. He knew that the initial victory in the warfare

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impressionistic conceptions, as to the poverty ideal, which make the older sources more meaningful.

For critical evaluations see Sabatier, Life, pp. 373-85; Goetz, op. cit., XXIV, 476-519; Van Ortoy, Anal. Boll. XIX (1900), 119-197; Boehmer, op. cit., LXVIII; Little, Eng. Hist. Review, pp. 649-50, 662-75; Burkitt, op. cit., p. 53; Gratien, op. cit., XV; Beaufreton, op. cit., pp. 300-309.

<sup>1</sup>Tres Soc., 5, 6, 7; Sabatier, Life, pp. 13-20; Bon., I, 2-3.

<sup>2</sup>Tres Soc., 8, ".... parum aut a saeculari tumultu se subtrahens, studebat in interiore homine recondere, Jesum Christum, ....."

of Christ must be won over self. Self-abnegation was the first step toward that personal enrichment to which Christ alone could lead him.<sup>1</sup>

The "Poverello" began, by and by, to frequent isolated places, where, under the spell of mystic forces, he felt himself drawn into commerce with the Christ. Upon one such occasion there appeared to him a vision of the Crucified One, whose career of renunciation and suffering he now felt impelled to reproduce.<sup>2</sup> "Henceforth, he clothed himself with the spirit of poverty, the feeling of humility, and the love of inmost piety."<sup>3</sup> For the sake of his Lord, and in order to attain poverty of self, he increased his benevolences to the poor and saluted lepers in all their loathsomeness.<sup>4</sup> Upon exchanging clothes with a beggar, and thus experiencing poverty at first hand, he entertained a strange exhilaration of spirit.<sup>5</sup>

Francis subsequently endured the jeers of the townspeople and the abuse of his bitterly disappointed father. The son's transformation from a "dashing young blood" of popular acclaim to the companion of social outcasts was too much for the proud bourgeois parent. Instead of manifesting business

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<sup>1</sup>Bon., I, 4; I Cel., 6, 7.

<sup>2</sup>Bon., I, 5.

<sup>3</sup>Bonaventura says I, 6, "Induit ex tunc spiritum paupertatis, humilitatis sensum et affectum intimae pietatis."

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., I, 6.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., I, 6; Tres Soc., 10.

acumen and extending his social conquests, Francis went about rebuilding fallen chapels and selling family merchandise to provide for the poor.

In despair the father haled into the presence of the bishop of Assisi this son, who insisted on disgracing the family and perversely squandering the paternal fortune upon debased humanity. In a paroxysm of renunciation Francis not only resigned his natural inheritance, but denuded himself of all his garments. Having tendered these to his father also, he publicly transferred his filial attachment from his earthly parent to the heavenly Father.<sup>1</sup>

Upon the rough garment provided by the bishop, the naked Francis traced the Cross which he was henceforth to share with the Crucified Christ. Soon, thereafter, he departed in joyful disregard of worldly interests to claim the inheritance of poverty. Henceforth he would be the "Herald of the Great King," the gospel physician for nauseous leprosy, the mendicant builder of fallen churches.<sup>2</sup>

One day while hearing the mass of the Apostles he was struck with the peculiar appropriateness to his case of the

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<sup>1</sup>Bon., II, 1-4; Tres Soc., 16-20; Sabatier, Life, 53-64.

<sup>2</sup>Bon., II, 4-8. For a group of thirteenth century documents depicting Francis' early life, his voluntary choice of poverty, and his progress in Gospel renunciation, see: Testimonia Minora Saeculi XIII de S. Francisco Assisiensi, .... ed. P. Leonardus Lemmens (Quaracchi, 1926), pp. 26-30, 32; 57-58, 63-64. This work is hereafter referred to as Lemmens, Testimonia.



gospel pattern laid down by Christ for his disciples. In this life of gospel preaching without money, extra clothing, or provisions, Francis found the specific realization of his formerly nebulous desires. His life was to be one of zealous imitation of gospel poverty, with apostolic propaganda for the cause of penitence, peace, and salvation in Christ.<sup>1</sup>

Francis' consultation of the Gospels convinced him that he should follow in Christ's steps the way of tribulation and suffering.<sup>2</sup> With Bernard, a fellow recruit for poverty, he witnessed a triple opening of the gospels. The first time the book opened to that scripture which conditioned perfection upon selling all and giving to the poor; the second prohibited the taking of provisions on the journey; the third prescribed self-denial and cross-bearing for the true follower of Christ. Francis immediately made this literal gospel passage the life and rule for himself and those who should follow him in the fellowship of God's Son.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Bon., III, 1-2; Tres Soc., 25.

<sup>2</sup>I Cel., 92, 93.

<sup>3</sup>Bon., III, 3; Tres Soc., 28, 29; Felder, *op. cit.*, p. 119; Cf. the *Actus Beati Francisci Et Sociorum Ejus* *Edidit* P. Sabatier, *Collection d'études et de documents*, Tome IV (Paris, 1902), I, 31. This Source is hereafter referred to as *Actus*. For an English translation of much of the same materials of different arrangement see: T. Okey, tr., *The Little Flowers of St. Francis*, referred to as *Little Flowers*, *Everyman's No. 485*. Cf. also Matt. XIX, 21; Luke IX, 3, 23.

This group of legends found in the *Actus* and the *Little Flowers* constructs, in a manner incomparably charming, the image of the St. and his early disciples, borne in the hearts of humble fourteenth century folk. Though of little value in  
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Literal adherence to Gospel poverty was Francis' ideal.<sup>1</sup> He was bent on observing both the precepts and the counsels of the Lord Jesus Christ.<sup>2</sup> It was this simple, inspiring affection which helped the thirteenth century to find again, in the Lord of the Gospels, a warm living presence.<sup>3</sup>

Francis later declared that when the Lord gave him brethren, no one dictated his course of action. The Most High revealed it to him that he should live according to the pattern of the Holy Gospel.<sup>4</sup> As the number of his associates increased, Francis caused this Gospel rule to be written down in a few simple words. Those who embraced this life gave as much as they could to the poor, and each wished for no more than a single patched tunic, a cord, and breeches.<sup>5</sup> The ob-

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a strictly historical sense, and though defective as a balanced portrayal of Francis' character, these exquisite flowers of legend disseminate much of the primitive Franciscan aroma. For critical evaluations see Beaufreton, St. François, pp. 308-309; Sabatier, Life, pp. 415-19; Gratien, op. cit., p. XVIII; E. G. Gardner, "The Little Flowers of St. Francis," in Franciscan Essays, pp. 97-129.

<sup>1</sup>Balthasar, op. cit., p. 6; Alencon, op. cit., pp. 266-69.

<sup>2</sup>Opusculum commonitorium et exhortatorium (epistola quam misit omnibus fidelibus, 7, abbrev. as Epist. ad fideles, in H. Boehmer, Analekten zur Geschichte des Franciscus von Assisi (Tubingen u. Leipzig, 1904), p. 53.

<sup>3</sup>Alencon, op. cit., pp. 296-97.

<sup>4</sup>Francis' words are, "Et postquam Dominus dedit michi de fratribus, nemo ostendebat michi, quid deberem facere, sed ipse Altissimus revelavit michi, quod, deberem vivere secundum formam sancti Evangelii." Testamentum, 4, Boehmer, op. cit., p. 37.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., 4.

servance of the Holy Gospel was laid down as the indissoluble foundation of the poor life.<sup>1</sup> The language of the rule was chiefly that of the Gospel, after whose perfection alone Francis yearned.<sup>2</sup> Disentangled from the circumlocutions and complexities of monastic legalism, this rule held forth, in eloquent clarity, the true and living way of poverty, which was Christ.<sup>3</sup>

This earliest code of Franciscan life has been lost, but the first rule, so called (1221), summons the friars to a life of obedience and chastity without property. It admonishes those who would be perfect to live a life in conformity with the teaching and renunciation of Jesus.<sup>4</sup>

There were many who were kindled by yearning after Christ's perfection. They despised the vanity of worldly things and followed Francis into the invigorating atmosphere of liberating gospel poverty.<sup>5</sup> Years afterward those who had gone with him all the way testified to the effulgent radiance

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<sup>1</sup>Bon., III, 8.

<sup>2</sup>I Cel., 32.

<sup>3</sup>G. G. Coulton, Christ, St. Francis and Today (Cambridge), p. 82; Dubois, op. cit., p. 120.

<sup>4</sup>Regula non bullata quae dicitur prima, I. Boehmer, op. cit., p. 1. This first rule is hereafter abbreviated as I Reg., 1, etc. Though this so-called rule of 1221 never became binding upon the brethren, the spirit of Francis found much fuller outlet in it than in the rule of 1223, which, with its concessions to the practical needs of the order, became definitive. Cf. Sabatier, Life, pp. 252-270.

<sup>5</sup>Bon., IV, 7; I Cel., 42-44.



of his life. His burning words had been torches lighting the way of the Cross and leading them on to love and imitation of the Crucified.<sup>1</sup>

Francis saw in the Minor Brethren a new and humble folk whom God gave to his Son. They differed from all who preceded them in their humility and poverty, and they were content to possess Christ alone.<sup>2</sup> When later Franciscans sought to modify the primitive rule and to conform more close-

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<sup>1</sup>*Speculum Perfectionis* LXXXVII, 10, ed. P. Sabatier, 1928, British Society of Franciscan Studies, vol. XIII. This source is subsequently abbreviated as *Spec. Perf.*, LXXXVII, 10, etc.

Sabatier believed that he had found in the *Speculum Perfectionis* the first of all the lives of St. Francis. He attributed it to Leo and the year 1227. Subsequent research has pretty well established the belief that the *Speculum* is rather a compilation taking final form in the fourteenth century. Some of the writings of brother Leo, together with materials from Second Celano and other sources, were probably arranged with explanatory materials by friars of the Portiuncula in 1318. This famous work is not the work of 1227, which Sabatier thought it to be. It bears, perhaps, less of the stamp of Francis' intimate companions than does Second Celano. It remains, however, a valuable source for the study of the Saint's inner life.

For critical evaluations see: Boechmer, *op. cit.*, p. LXVIII; Beaufreton, *op. cit.*, pp. 283-300; Little, *English Hist. Review*, pp. 653-662; Van Ortoy in *Anal. Boll.* XIX (1900), 141; E. C. Butler in *Encyclopedia Britannica* XI ed., vol. X, 929; Burkitt, in *.... Essays in Commem.*, pp. 15-61; 52-53; Gratien, *op. cit.*, p. XV; *Speculum Perfectionis seu S. Fr. A. legenda antiquissima auctore fratre Leone nunc primum edidit P. Sabatier* (Collection d'etudes et de documents, t. 1) (Paris, 1898); *Le Speculum Perfectionis ou Mémoires De Frère Léon* (Tome I, Texte Latin) Prépare par Paul Sabatier (Manchester, 1928); Sabatier, *Life*, pp. 373-385.

<sup>2</sup>*Spec. Perf.*, XXVI, 1-2; See the *Legenda Antiqua S. Francisci .... Perouse* 98 b., ed. F. M. Delorme, in *Archivum franciscanum historicum* (AFH), XV, (1922), 310.

ly to current monastic practice, Francis answered, "The example of the poverty of the Son of God should constrain us more than any other Religious."<sup>1</sup>

Jacques de Vitry marked the superiority of those early Franciscans over all other orders of the day. They were Minors, indeed, dedicated to the poverty and humility of the primitive church. They observed not only the Gospel precepts but the counsels also, as they followed in nakedness the naked Christ.<sup>2</sup> Francis was most anxious that his brethren experience rejuvenation of soul by making voluntary commitment to that poverty which Christ and his mother had chosen to enjoy.<sup>3</sup>

The perfect love which the "Little Poor Man" bore the Christ made inevitable his affection for the poverty which Christ loved.<sup>4</sup> Losing himself in the enveloping personality of Jesus, Francis sought to bury the identity of his own purpose in the Master's will. He attempted to detach himself completely from all those divisive possessions of body and sense, from all those earthly desires and corporal limitations which thwarted union with the divine.<sup>5</sup> When his proprietor-

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<sup>1</sup>II Cel., 61, "Magis nos exempla paupertatis Filii Dei quam caeteros religiosi cogere debent."

<sup>2</sup>Cf. *Historia Orientalis*, l. II, C. 32. De religione et predicatione fratrum minorum, as reproduced in Boehmer, *op. cit.*, p. 102-106; Lemmens, *Testimonia*, p. 81.

<sup>3</sup>Tres Soc., 39-40; II Cel., 55; Epist. ad fideles, 1, Boehmer, *op. cit.*, p. 50.

<sup>4</sup>Dubois, *op. cit.*, 210; W.J.Knox-Little, *St. Francis of Assisi, His Times, Life and Work* (New York, 1898), p. 116.

<sup>5</sup>Coulton, *Five Centuries*, II, 127; Felder, *op. cit.*, 103-104, 487-88; Bon. X, 1.

ship had been so far reduced that he possessed only two mites, his body and his soul, he was constrained by the love of Christ to renounce these also. Through bodily fasting and spiritual yearnings he progressed toward union with Jesus.<sup>1</sup>

Francis fostered poverty as the only security against the isolation of his brethren from the one true desire, will, pleasure, and delight, which was the love and enjoyment of the Creator, Redeemer, and Saviour.<sup>2</sup> The friars were reminded that they had relinquished body and soul for the love of Christ. They must be ready at any time to empty themselves of life itself to repossess that life more fully in Him.<sup>3</sup> Eternal life was the meed of those who reproduced, in themselves, the suffering, shame, and utter deprivation of the Saviour.<sup>4</sup> Through poverty every earthly and transitory thing was trodden under foot. By it every hindrance was removed from the soul's union with the Eternal.

A charming legend portrays Francis seeking through apostolic lovers of Holy Poverty to obtain this same virtue from the Lord Jesus Christ. Who could hope to attain the perfect love of the Christ until he knew that poverty, which companioned Christ on the Cross, was buried with him and with

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<sup>1</sup>Bon., IX, 3.

<sup>2</sup>I Reg., 23.

<sup>3</sup>I Reg., 16.

<sup>4</sup>Verba Admonitionis, 6, abbreviated as Verb. Admon.6.  
Cf. Boehmer, op. cit., p. 44.



him ascended into heaven.<sup>1</sup>

Poverty gave that freedom from all distracting interests which enabled Francis and his followers to experience a consuming, yet fructifying, love for Christ and all humanity.<sup>2</sup> In an ecstasy of passion for the Saviour, who so loved him, Francis offered himself to the flaming ardour of that love which was able to detach his soul from all things under heaven.<sup>3</sup>

Inborn kindness and tenderness from on high moved Francis to compassion for the poor. Yet more significant was the fact that his mind swiftly referred back to Christ the penury which he found in any one. In all the poor he read the Son of the Poor Lady. Whenever the Saint found poverty greater than his own, he was instantly smitten with grief that another should have been truer to the Lord of Heaven than he.<sup>4</sup> To revile a poor man was to wrong Christ, who made himself poor in the world for the sake of men.<sup>5</sup>

Francis' greediness for poverty was as great as the desire of most men for gold. Poverty was to him a pledge and

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<sup>1</sup>Actus XIII; Cf. the "Prayer to Obtain Poverty," in The Writings of St. Francis of Assisi, tr. by Constance, Countess De La Warr, pp. 139-41, abbreviated as Writings. See this work for translation and critical evaluation of Francis' works. Salvatorelli, op. cit., p. 123; H. Thode, Franz von Assisi und die Anfänge der Kunst der Renaissance in Italien (Berlin, 1904), p. 51.

<sup>2</sup>Bon., IX, 1-6; Gratien, op. cit., p. 47.

<sup>3</sup>Cf. the "Prayer to Obtain Love," Writings, p. 86.

<sup>4</sup>II Cel., 83; I Cel., 76; Bon., VII, 6.

<sup>5</sup>II Cel., 76.

an earnest of eternal riches; it was the pearl of the gospel.<sup>1</sup>  
It was Francis' life ambition that his friars be the poorest of all men for Christ's sake. To be surpassed in poverty was to lose the incomparable prize, for poverty had Christ and through him she had all in all.<sup>2</sup> Poverty was a treasure, boundless and divine, which Francis felt unworthy to possess in his base vessel.<sup>3</sup>

St. Francis' whole life was one of conformity to Christ the Blessed.<sup>4</sup> His own disciples were chosen and sent forth as imitators of Gospel poverty after the Apostolic

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<sup>1</sup>III Cel., 55; Little Flowers, pp. 105-106; Bon., VII, 1.

<sup>2</sup>According to II Cel., 84, Francis says of Poverty, "Christum habet, et per ipsum in omnibus omnia."

<sup>3</sup>Actus XIII, 21.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., I, 1-5; Tres Soc., 26; Jacques de Vitry, Boehmer, op. cit., pp. 102-103; Felder, op. cit., pp. 108-110.

See Bartolommeo de Pisa's Conformitatu scilicet vite Beati Fra. ad vitam Domini nostri Jesu Christi. Impress. Mediolani .... 1513. This work is notable for its collection of manifold legends and emphasizes above all things the conformity of Francis to the life of the Christ.

On the poverty of Christ, his disciples and the gospel life, Cf. Conform., 148 H, 149 H, J, K, L. For Francis' absolute conformity to the Christ and his life of poverty, see especially: Conform. 149 A.-153 A et seq. (Secunde partis fructus quarti conformitatis huius secudi libri). Bartolommeo not only portrays Francis' perfect conformity to Christ's poverty, he also gives copious references to the sources from which his information is drawn. As a collection of source materials demonstrating the likeness of Francis' poverty to that of the Christ, this late fourteenth century work is quite valuable. This work is not cited more frequently in this study because the materials which Bartolommeo provides have, in this dissertation, been drawn directly from the original sources.

For evaluations of this work, Cf. Sabatier, Life, pp. 421-427; Beaufreton, St. François, pp. 316-317.

model. As he approached his latter end, Francis redoubled his efforts to attain the perfect renunciation of his Redeemer. He admonished Clare, the handmaid of Christ, to be ever true to the poverty of the Lord and His mother.<sup>1</sup> Ill and in pain, he felt no need to have the Scriptures read to him. He had in mind an ample store for meditation and reflection. He needed nothing more, for he knew Christ, the poor man Crucified.<sup>2</sup>

Francis awaited death as the final liberation from all material and sensory things. To the last he pressed the claims of poverty and the priority of the Holy Gospel before all other ordinances.<sup>3</sup> At last, lying naked on the bare earth, he achieved his final victory over temporal things; he gave final proof that he had nothing in common with the world. He had done his duty. He commended his brethren to the Christ, who would teach them how to discharge their responsibility likewise.<sup>4</sup>

#### C. Poverty in its Relation to the Christian Virtues

Francis' ideal of poverty was never divorced from its proper place in the association of Christian virtues. One cannot understand his creative interpretation of absolute poverty

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<sup>1</sup>Ultima voluntas quam scripsit sororibus S. Clarae, Boehmer, op. cit., p. 35.

<sup>2</sup>II Cel., 105.

<sup>3</sup>II Cel., 216; Spec. Perf., LXXXVII-'VIII.

<sup>4</sup>II Cel., 214-216; Bon., XIV, 4-5.

until one appreciates the interrelation of that poverty with humility, simplicity, and obedience. Before Francis and his brethren could make definite their renunciation of material things, they had to prepare a place for these virtues with which Christ associated himself in poverty. Indeed, the consistent practice of poverty was but the unified expression of those virtues involved in the imitation of Christ.<sup>1</sup> Poverty thus became the means to moral perfection. In a real sense it was the source and form of all the virtues.<sup>2</sup> It was the crown and adornment of the Christian graces, the preeminent approach to the Christ life.<sup>3</sup>

The hero of the Little Flowers beholds in poverty the celestial virtue which reduces everything temporal to subjection, and removes all barriers to free association with the eternal God. Poverty is for him a virtue which spans the interstellar spaces bringing the souls of earth into communion with those of heaven. Poverty is, and always has been, the companion of Christ. It facilitates the progress to heaven of souls who love it, "for it guards the armor of humility and charity."<sup>4</sup>

According to another source of poetic insight, Francis

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<sup>1</sup>A. Harnack, History of Dogma (London, 1897-99), VI, 93.

<sup>2</sup>Alencon, op. cit., p. 296.

<sup>3</sup>Felder, op. cit., p. 106.

<sup>4</sup>Actus XIII, 24, " .... quum ipsa una humilitatis et caritatis arma custodiat." Cf. Conform., 44 C which reproduces Francis' praise of poverty.



praises this virtue which prepares, in the soul of man, a mansion for God. Poverty is the foundation and guardian of all the virtues. It holds the primacy among the evangelical counsels. Other virtues need not fear rain and storm, if they are founded on the rock of poverty. Through this virtue which he loved with a special love, Christ wrought salvation in the midst of the earth. He made it the cornerstone of his house. "The Kingdom of Heaven which He promised hereafter to all the Virtues, He opened to Poverty even in this life."<sup>1</sup>

In the spirit, if not in the words, of "The Prayer to Obtain Poverty," Francis poured out his love for the Queen of Virtues, whom Christ himself left heaven to espouse. Poverty, who trod all things underfoot, was universal queen. Her ministrations to the suffering Christ made her lovable above all things. With her seal Francis longed to be marked. Out of love for Christ's name he vowed to possess naught for himself and to make but sparing use of the gifts of others.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>M. Carmichael, The Lady Poverty (London, 1901), I, 3-8, espec. p. 5. This work, bearing the sub title "A XIIIth Century Allegory," is a translation of the "Sacrum commercium Beati Francisci cum Domina Paupertate," ed. Alençon (Rome, 1930). It has been dated as early as 1227. It has sometimes been attributed to Giovanni da Parma; sometimes to Giovanni Parenti. There are obstacles in the way of conceding such authorship, and the date may be much later. However, the true Franciscan spirit hovers over much of this highly poetic work. For evaluations and editions see Carmichael's Introduction, pp. XVIII-XLVIII; M. Beaufreton, Anthologie franciscaine du moyen âge (Paris, 1921), pp. 26-27. See also Analecta Bollandiana XIX (1900), 65, 459-460.

<sup>2</sup>Writings, pp. 139-141; Carmichael, The Lady Poverty, Appendix, pp. 183-191.

Bonaventura asserts that Francis regarded poverty as the Queen of Virtues, since "she shone forth thus excellently in the King of Kings and in the Queen, his mother."<sup>1</sup> To the brethren in council, who inquired which virtue would render a man most pleasing to Christ, Francis replied that poverty was a special way of salvation, being as it were the leaven of humility and the root of perfection, whose fruits were manifold, though hidden.<sup>2</sup>

Though Francis placed poverty at the head of the Christian virtues, he was acutely aware of its interaction with all of them. If humility and simplicity could not exist without poverty, neither could poverty continue without their good offices. Franciscan literature is replete with examples of Francis' high regard for all such graces as contributors to true poverty and Gospel progress.

When called upon to make three gifts to his Lord, Francis brought out of his bosom three balls of gold, whose meaning he sought to know. He was informed that the gold balls symbolized holy obedience, most exalted poverty, and most resplendent chastity.<sup>3</sup> All of these commanded his prayerful attention throughout life.

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<sup>1</sup>Bon., VII, 1; See also Conform., 150 G; 149 L.

<sup>2</sup>Bonaventura makes Francis say, "Paupertatem noveritis, Fratres, specialem viam esse salutis tanquam humilitatis fomentum perfectionisque radicem, cuius est fructus multiplex, sed occultus." - Bon., VII, 1; See also Conform., 150 G.

<sup>3</sup>Actus IX, 64.

Francis' ideal friar was one in whom simplicity, poverty, and the whole-souled imitation of Christ were co-mingled. Humility and purity were most indispensable. Purity was exemplified by those who despised the world, sought heaven, and never ceased to adore, in purity of heart, the living Lord God.<sup>1</sup>

The Saint of Assisi believed in overcoming negations with positive qualities. Virtues were necessary to put vices to flight. Fear and ignorance could not stand before charity and wisdom. Anger and vexation must fade away like shadows before the light of humility and patience. Peace and meditation dispelled anxiety and dissipation. Mercy and temperance cast out superfluity and harshness. Where poverty with joy was to be found, neither cupidity nor avarice was present.<sup>2</sup> Poverty, as Francis knew it, was not merely another name for vacuity. It was symbolic of those spiritual energies which brook no resistance and fill all life with the leaven of positive virtue.

Francis' "Laud of the Virtues" is a remarkable confirmation of the dominating role of poverty in the whole of Christian activity. He hails Wisdom, who is a queen in her own right, as the sister of pure Simplicity. Lady Poverty is

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<sup>1</sup>Spec. Perf., LXXXV; Epist. ad fideles, 9; Verb. Admon., 16.

<sup>2</sup>Verb. Admon., 27. For a thirteenth century sermon on Francis' practice of poverty and other Gospel virtues see: Lemmens, Testimonia, pp. 117-121.

the sister of Holy Humility. Charity and Obedience sustain a similar relationship to each other. Nevertheless all these virtues derive from the same divine source. No man can possess any of them without first dying to himself. True poverty of spirit alone can attain to Wisdom, Simplicity, Obedience, and Charity. The possession of any one without injury to another insures possession of all, but injury to any one precludes the possession of all the others.

One may infer that an offense to poverty will entail the loss of Humility, Simplicity, Wisdom, and Obedience. By the same token no one can dispense with any or all of these virtues without depriving himself of true poverty.

Each of these virtues puts vices and sins to confusion. Each combats something inimical to poverty. Wisdom confounds Satan and all his devices. Simplicity confounds the Wisdom of the world and of the flesh. Charity is more than conqueror over sundry temptations. Obedience holds in leash the wishes of body and flesh, keeping the body in readiness to obey the spirit, its brother. Poverty herself vanquishes the advance guard of covetousness, avarice, and conformity to the world.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Laudes de Virtutibus, Boehmer, op. cit., pp. 64-65; Writings, pp. 85-86.

Francis' admonitions with regard to virtues and vices (Verb. Admon., 27, Boehmer, op. cit., p. 49), and his Lauds of the Virtues (Boehmer, op. cit., pp. 64-65) suggest his acquaintance, probably quite indirect, with the principle of contraries and the medieval tables of vices.

(Footnote concluded on following page)



#### D. Humility and the Ideal of Poverty

Of all the virtues which Francis commended, perhaps none identified itself more closely with genuine poverty than did humility, simplicity, and obedience. Being truly poor according to the pattern of the Saviour involved more than the renunciation of material goods. The annihilation of the proprietary spirit and the ready disparagement of self were long steps on the royal road to poverty.<sup>1</sup>

Humility, in Francis' eyes, approximated perfect poverty. The two were always associated in his thoughts. Each depended upon and reenforced the other. If not identical with poverty, humility was at least its blood relation.<sup>2</sup> "Holy Humility," said Francis, "confounds pride and all men of this world and all things which are in this world."<sup>3</sup> Celano declares, as does Bonaventura, that Francis saw in humility the guardian and ornament of all the virtues. Laying the founda-

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For the principle of contraries viz., Avarice vs. liberality, Pride vs. humility, etc., see Cassian, Collatio, XIX, Cap. 14, 15, MPL, XLIX, 1143 B, 1145 A.

For representative medieval discussions of the vices see: Gregory the Great's Moralium, Lib. XXXI, (Cap. XLV), 88, MPL, LXXVI, 621; and Cassian's Collatio, V - De Octo Principalibus Vitiis, MPL, XLIX, 611-642; but see especially, Cassian's Coenobiorum Institutis Lib. V-XII, MPL, XLIX, 201-476.

<sup>1</sup>M. Beaufreton, Saint François d'Assise (2 ed.; Paris, 1925), p. 115.

<sup>2</sup>Felder, op. cit., pp. 203-204; Schmitz, op. cit., p. 62; Harnack, History of Dogma, VI, 85; cf. F. Glaser, Die Franziskanische Bewegung (Stuttgart, 1903), p. 51; Laudes de Virtutibus, Boehmer, op. cit., p. 64.

<sup>3</sup>"Sancta Humilitas confundit superbiam et omnes homines huius mundi et omnia, que in mundo sunt," - Laudes de Virtutibus, Boehmer, op. cit., p. 65.

tion learned from Christ, he sought to build himself upon it. Among the lesser he would be the least. Loftiness was absent from his mouth, pomp from his gestures, ostentation from his actions. Possessed of the humility of true poverty, Francis could not even permit himself the luxury of opinionated thought.<sup>1</sup>

The spirit of the Lord sought humility, patience, and pure simplicity. Francis took up the divine search.<sup>2</sup> It was his passionate desire that all the friars follow the humility and poverty of the Lord Jesus Christ, being content with food and covering.<sup>3</sup> As a faithful servant and perfect imitator of that Christ, he felt himself thoroughly metamorphosed by the virtue of holy humility in Him. By act and word, he animated his brethren in the practice of this virtue, which he ardently desired for them all, and especially for the ministers and preachers.<sup>4</sup>

Francis was particularly wary about allowing his brethren to rise unto rulership in the church.<sup>5</sup> As he said they were called Minores in order that they might not presume

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<sup>1</sup>III Cel., 140; Bon., VI, 1; On Francis' humility see Actus X. See also A. G. Little, Un nouveau manuscrit franciscain, Ancien Phillipps 12290 (Paris, 1914-19), no's 59, 67. This source abbreviated hereafter as M S-Little, is Fascicule XVIII, Opuscles de Critique Historique.

<sup>2</sup>I Reg., 17.

<sup>3</sup>I Reg., 9; II Reg., 6, 12.

<sup>4</sup>Spec. Perf., LXXIII.

<sup>5</sup>Bon., VI, 5.

to be greater. Their very name was to be a constant reminder of the humility which they had come to learn in the school of the humble Christ.<sup>1</sup> He willed that none should be called prior; that all alike should take the name of Friars Minor and wash one another's feet.<sup>2</sup> No friar working in another man's house was to be elevated to a high position, such as chamberlain, cellarer, or steward. He was to be inferior and subject to all in the same dwelling.<sup>3</sup>

Francis thought that his brethren must surely be humble when in the Mass they beheld the sublime humility of the Master of the Universe, God Himself, and Son of God. He so far humbled himself as to hide (Himself) for their salvation under the feeble appearance of bread. Francis besought them, in the sight of this divine humility to pour out their hearts before Christ. Let them humble themselves in turn that they might be exalted by Him. In a last poetic plea Francis said, "Hold back nothing of yourselves for yourselves, in order that he may recover you whole, who gives himself wholly to you."<sup>4</sup>

True poverty of spirit was not easy to attain as

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<sup>1</sup>Bon., VI, 5.

<sup>2</sup>I Reg., 6; Actus, 17; and MS-Little, 74, for Francis' aversion to such titles as "magister."

<sup>3</sup>I Reg., 7.

<sup>4</sup>Epistola ad capitulum generale, 2, Boehmer, op. cit., p. 60. "Nichil ergo de vobis retineatis vobis, ut totos vos recipiat, qui se vobis exhibet totum."

Francis well knew. Many, indeed, could be faithful at prayer and the divine office; they could practice abstinence and bodily mortification. Real deprivation and injury they could not bear. In contrast with them were those who were truly poor in spirit to the extent of hating themselves and cherishing those who struck them on the cheek. This was the kind of Gospel abandon to which professors of poverty should aspire.<sup>1</sup>

Francis was delighted with his designation as a poor, simple man, despised and unlettered.<sup>2</sup> A peasant's frank admonition to him to be as good as men trusted him to be was one of his most prized incentives to humility.<sup>3</sup> He could not tolerate flattery and vain glory in others, or in himself. Having once felt an impulse to self-complacency upon rendering a service to an old begging woman, he expiated his crime by public confession.<sup>4</sup>

"He laid an eternal anathema on men's applause," realizing well, how the reward of fame lessens the reward of conscience. He was aware how frequently vanity replaced charity as a motivation for conduct. Too often the desire for popular acclaim outweighed the love of Christ as an incentive to action.<sup>5</sup> He scrupulously avoided all singularity in behavior

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<sup>1</sup>Verb. Admon., 14, Boehmer, op. cit., p. 46.

<sup>2</sup>Spec. Perf., LXIV; II Cel., 141.

<sup>3</sup>II Cel., 141-142; For an example of Francis' striking humility see Actus, X.

<sup>4</sup>II Cel., 132-134.

<sup>5</sup>II Cel., 139.



which might tend to elevate or set him apart for special notice.<sup>1</sup>

For the sake of Christ, and as an exercise in self mastery, he rendered the most menial services to the lepers once so revolting to him. As a lover of uttermost humility he sometimes abode among them, serving them diligently for the love of God, laving their feet, binding their sores, and even kissing their reeking wounds.<sup>2</sup> Despising things formerly loved, he now found unaccustomed sweetness in things once bitter.<sup>3</sup>

Francis regarded that man as blessed who attained as great humility in the presence of his subjects as in the midst of his superiors.<sup>4</sup> He himself resigned his prelacy to Peter Catana "bearing himself" thenceforth "more humbly in all things than any of the others."<sup>5</sup> It was characteristic of him that he habitually "showed all meekness to all men, adapting himself in profitable fashion to the behavior of all."<sup>6</sup> As death approached, he refused the tunic made for him by the brethren, and ordered them "to sew a sack over him

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<sup>1</sup>II Cel., 14, ".... singularitatem in omnibus fugiens, quae omnium vitiorum labe sordescit." Cf. Nicholson, op. cit., pp. 46-47.

<sup>2</sup>Bon., I, 6; II, 6.

<sup>3</sup>Tres Soc., 11.

<sup>4</sup>Verb. Admon., 23.

<sup>5</sup>Spec. Perf., XXXIX.

<sup>6</sup>I Cel., 83.

in token and in example of humility and Lady Poverty."<sup>1</sup>

### E. Simplicity and the Ideal of Poverty

Francis in his search for poverty yearned, likewise,

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<sup>1</sup>Spec. Perf., CXII.

One cannot fail to observe in Francis' struggle for humility a disturbing, though perhaps unconscious, tendency to affectation and display. The ends of simplicity and humility seem at times to have been defeated by a too lively consciousness of the means through which their attainment was sought. Francis' eternal awareness of infinitesimal deviations from the observance of humility witness more eloquently to an exacting ambition for perfection than they evidence precautions against pride.

Francis' actions sometimes strike a false, discordant note in the harmony of his simple life. One cannot commend as admirable his exaltation to public attention of his every fault through dramatizations of needlessly rigorous punishments for those mistakes. His love for symbolic action and his penchant for self-disparagement amounted, at times, to artificial display bordering on the theatrical. His having a sack sewed on himself at death in token of Lady Poverty gives the unfortunate suggestion of performance for effect. Kissing a leper's sores bespeaks cheap histrionics and a diseased mysticism.

It would appear that Francis' passion for humility did not transform him into the completely selfless individual which he honestly sought to be. The purposeful manner in which he undertook to abase himself was in keeping with an ambitious program of self perfection. Exercises in humility really gave new opportunities for self expression. The refusal to be outdone, whether in poverty or in humility, constituted an exhibition of the very ego which he sought so honestly to reduce.

The satisfaction which Francis derived from an aggressive policy of self-disparagement was in the nature of a subtle reenforcement to self esteem. His spectacular battle for self-conquest served to focus upon him that popular admiration which he professed to avoid. The dramatic aspects of his humility, simplicity, and obedience, must, at times, have attracted more public notice than the basic qualities of the humble life.

In all probability there were occasions when Francis staged a parade of humility which edified less than the unassuming exercise of more gracious virtues ably supported by unaffected modesty. With all of his fundamental sincerity and devoted surrender to God, he could not wholly escape the Nemesis of pride attending the too conscious cultivation of humility.

to arrive at that simplicity so indispensably a characteristic of Christ and his apostles.<sup>1</sup> With singleness of heart and purpose, oblivious to any competing interests or desires, he pressed forward, trusting and unafraid, into the arms of the Eternal. In proportion to his freedom from the complexities of thought and action was the momentum of his flight from self to the Divine.<sup>2</sup>

Without the cloying processes of syllogistic reasoning, his intuition plunged swift and sure to the heart of satisfying reality. His soul had a clear purchase on the single, ultimate truth which his mind alone could not grasp. He only knew that the less of temporal things he had, the more he owned of God, who possessed him.<sup>3</sup> In his impatience to be single in being and at one with God, he abjured all multiplicities of spirit and possession.<sup>4</sup>

Francis was a man of unassuming character and child-like naivete. He was seldom possessed of a systematic train of ideas logically developed. His whole life was dominated rather by the propulsive power of a deeply sensitized soul, than by the dictates of a clear, cold intellect. Feeling,

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<sup>1</sup> H. C. Lea, A History of the Inquisition of the Middle Ages (New York, 1888), I, 264.

<sup>2</sup> Nicholson, op. cit., pp. 182-183.

<sup>3</sup> Dubois, op. cit., p. 94.

<sup>4</sup> F. Hugel, The Mystical Element of Religion as Studied in Saint Catherine of Genoa and Her Friends (London, 1923), I, pp. 65-66.

soul, and action were unusually harmonized in a personality of natural simplicity and abiding purity.<sup>1</sup>

He was deeply solicitous that his brethren in Christ be not led by the spirit and wisdom of the world to seek appearance more than truth, verbosity more than deeds, affectation rather than honesty, outer exhibition rather than inner perfection.<sup>2</sup> "With all watchfulness and care he was fashioning his new sons by a new education, teaching them to tread with undeviating steps the way of holy poverty and blessed simplicity."<sup>3</sup> In him they read an animate lesson "in innocence of life, in simplicity of word, in purity of heart, in the love of God ....." His look was candid; his life was "simple in all things," and "destitute of arrogance."<sup>4</sup>

Francis was anxious to bring the lives of all his comrades in joyous poverty under the spell of "Holy Simplicity, the daughter of Grace, the sister of Wisdom, and the mother of Righteousness." The Simplicity which won his undivided approval was "that alone, which, being content with God, sets at naught all else." At its farthest out-reach, simplicity required that a man examine himself, withhold judgment of

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<sup>1</sup>G. Schnürer, Die Vertiefung des religiösen lebens im Abendlande zur zeit der kreuzzüge Franz von Assisi (München, 1905), pp. 126-130.

<sup>2</sup>Felder, op. cit., pp. 249-250.

<sup>3</sup>I Cel., 26 " .... sanctae paupertatis beataeque simplicitatis viam ....."

<sup>4</sup>I Cel., 83.



others, and surrender to superiors. Action bulked larger than learning or teaching. The soul grounded in simplicity readily left wordy digressions and the mere shell of things to search out the supreme and undivided good. Such simplicity did Francis require both in lettered and lay men, not regarding it as the opponent but as the sister of wisdom.<sup>1</sup>

In accord with Francis' wishes, many of the early brethren embraced that simplicity which true poverty requires, "For holy simplicity had so filled them, innocency of life was so teaching them, poverty of heart so possessed them that they were utterly ignorant of duplicity of mind."<sup>2</sup>

"The Little Man of Assisi" longed poignantly to preserve his Minors in a bond of close union permeated by genuine simplicity. He yearned to have "the greater united to the lesser, the wise joined to the simple by brotherly affection, the distant coupled together by the cement of love." Herein the wise would be admonished by the example of illiterate men energized by heavenly aspirations; the simple, likewise, would profit by the sight of illustrious men abandoning brilliant careers for lives of voluntary humility.<sup>3</sup>

The minister-general was certainly to care no less for the lowly and simple than for the wise and great. Though "allowed to excel in the gift of learning, he ought in his behavior rather to bear the image of pious simplicity and to foster

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<sup>1</sup>II Cel., 189.

<sup>2</sup>I Cel., 46.

<sup>3</sup>II Cel., 191-192.

virtue."<sup>1</sup>

It was a cause of great sorrow to Francis in his later years that "some had left their first works and had forgotten their old simplicity in new inventions." To the earlier life of simple desires, with its discriminating sense of values, he tried, often vainly, to recall them.<sup>2</sup>

#### F. Obedience and the Ideal of Poverty

The Franciscan rule enjoined a life of obedience and chastity without property.<sup>3</sup> Though Francis placed his chief emphasis upon poverty, he regarded both purity and obedience as indispensable to a life of genuine renunciation. In his elevated conception of poverty, obedience occupied an exalted position, together with humility and simplicity.<sup>4</sup>

Self-will was, for Francis, the very antithesis of the poor spirit and true poverty. He recalled God's command to Adam not to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. That man was already eating of the tree of the knowledge of good and would inevitably reap the fruit of the knowledge of evil, who regarded his will as his own property.<sup>5</sup>

Francis prized above all else his true discipleship of the Christ. That discipleship was conditioned upon the

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<sup>1</sup>III Cel., 185; Spec. Perf., LXXX.

<sup>2</sup>I Cel., 103-104.

<sup>3</sup>I Reg., 1; II Reg., 1; Actus IX, 64.

<sup>4</sup>Felder, *op. cit.*, p. 228; On Francis' practice of obedience see: *Sermo IV "De quatuor virtutibus in eo repertis,"* 4, in Lemmens, *Testimonia*, pp. 119-121.

<sup>5</sup>Verb. Admon., 2.

complete poverty exemplified by the Master. Christ had said, "Every one that doth not renounce all that he possesseth cannot be my disciple," and, "He that will save his life shall lose it." Absolute poverty of self and of possessions was, therefore, the price of following the Saviour. But that utter poverty was dependent upon unqualified obedience. "He abandons all that he possesses, loses his body and his soul, who entirely gives himself up to obedience in the hands of his superior." The individual might see greater soul profit in a path divergent from his superior's commands. He was none the less to surrender his will to God. Of course one might be forced to disobey a superior's command which was contrary to conscience, but he would have to bear in love the persecution which might ensue.<sup>1</sup> Unquestioning obedience was the way to uncompromising poverty, which was in turn, the key to the Christian apostolate.

The man of Assisi esteemed most highly the virtue of obedience which confounded corporal wishes, keeping the body in mortification ready to obey the spirit its brother.<sup>2</sup> He saw in a dead body the perfect illustration of complete obedience. No matter where it was placed, it did not complain at being left or being removed elsewhere. In a lofty seat it looked down, not up. Clad in purple, it appeared all the

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<sup>1</sup>Verb. Admon., 3.

<sup>2</sup>Laudes de Virtutibus, Boehmer, op. cit., pp. 64-65.

more pale. It suggested the truly obedient man who kept his place without questioning; preserved humility, though in authority; and esteemed himself more unworthy the more he was honored.<sup>1</sup> Such obedience was meet for men having, for the sake of God, given up their own wills.<sup>2</sup> In them poverty effected a perfect work.

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<sup>1</sup>Bon., VI, 4; Spec. Perf., XLVIII.

<sup>2</sup>II Reg., 10.



### CHAPTER III

#### PROBLEMS IN THE APPLICATION OF THE IDEAL OF POVERTY

##### A. Learning and the Ideal of Poverty

Francis did not regard learning as necessarily an evil in itself. He did believe that it constituted a dangerous temptation to abandon that simplicity and detachment from worldly interests which poverty demanded.<sup>1</sup> "He had a humble veneration for learning and for learned men in their proper place, but their proper place was not among the Friars Minor, who had chosen the way of simplicity."<sup>2</sup> He declared that with so many men aspiring to knowledge, that man should be blessed who made himself barren for the love of God.<sup>3</sup> Francis was clearly averse to the exaltation of learning to a prominent place in his order.<sup>4</sup> If introduced, it would cause friction between learned and simple brethren; it would require the possession of books and equipment incompatible with true poverty; it would necessitate permanent houses and a stability

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<sup>1</sup>Nicholson, op. cit., p. 187.

<sup>2</sup>A. G. Little, "The First Hundred Years of the Franciscan School at Oxford," in W. W. Seton, St. Francis of Assisi, Essays in Commemoration (London, 1926), p. 165.

<sup>3</sup>Spec. Perf., IV, 13.

<sup>4</sup>Beaufreton, op. cit., pp. 35, 42, 43; Little, op. cit., p. 165; Coulton, Christ, St. Francis and Today, pp. 88-89.

fatal to the mobile liberty of the friars.<sup>1</sup>

Like the mystic he was, Francis believed as thoroughly in the subordination of intellect to spirit as he did in the sovereignty of the divine over the personal will. To put one's faith in the intellect was to depend on something less than God, and to defeat thereby the perfect surrender to Him, which poverty involved.<sup>2</sup>

The "Poor Man of Christ" had renounced propriety of every kind, including that type of selfish appropriation which learning involved. He labored to forestall that pride in intellectual achievement which is more devastating, as it is more subtle, than the pride in other possessions.<sup>3</sup>

Francis declared that one who would attain to real poverty ought to renounce not only the wisdom of the world, but also, in some measure, the knowledge of letters; so that dispossessed of such an inheritance, he might go in the strength of the Lord and give himself up naked into the arms of the Crucified. For as he pointed out, that man did not perfectly renounce the world at all who reserved in the secret places of his heart a shrine for his own senses.<sup>4</sup> "Learn-

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<sup>1</sup>Gratien, op. cit., pp.88-89; Little, op.cit., p. 165.

<sup>2</sup>Nicholson, op. cit., p. 152.

<sup>3</sup>Nicholson, op. cit., p. 176.

<sup>4</sup>Bonaventura VII, 2, causes Francis to say, "Ad huius, inquit, culmen qui cupit attingere non solum mundanae prudentiae verum etiam litterarum peritiae renuntiare quodam modo debet, ut, tali expropriatus possessione, introeat in poten-  
(Footnote concluded on following page)

ing," he said, "makes many men indocile, not suffering a certain stiffness of theirs to be bent by the discipline of humility."<sup>1</sup> Francis was constant in his insistence that poverty be wider and deeper than the renunciation of material things. For him, poverty was the queen of a completely dispossessed spirit - a spirit which was insensible to all things which detracted from union with the Divine.

The "Lover of Poverty" put virtuous labors before books and science, because he preferred the edification of charity to the self-inflation which goes with knowledge. Said Francis, "As much knowledge hath a man as he doth work, and a Religious is as good a speaker as his works proclaim, for the worker is known by his fruits."<sup>2</sup>

Francis lauded simplicity in opposition to an inordinate desire for knowledge.<sup>3</sup> The sources graphically depict his fears that those led by the desire of learning would find their hands empty in the day of tribulation. In that day books would avail nothing. He was not, hereby, manifesting displeasure with Scripture reading. He was merely trying to .

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tias Domini et nudum se offerat brachiis Crucifixi. Nequaquam enim saeculo perfecte renuntiat qui proprii sensus loculos intra cordis arcana reservat." See: II Cel., 194 who had attributed to Francis an almost identical speech for the benefit of great clerks about to join the order.

<sup>1</sup>III Cel., 144.

<sup>2</sup>Spec. Perf., IV.

<sup>3</sup>Francis recommended in the same breath that he exhorted to poverty, ".... simplicitatem, contra inordinatum appetitum scientiae; ...." - Actus, LXII, 7.

dissuade his followers from devoting undue attention to learning.<sup>1</sup> He anticipated a time shortly to come when the knowledge "that puffeth up" would be an occasion of ruin.<sup>2</sup>

The "Poverello" could not bear to see his company repudiate its primitive vow of gospel simplicity in order to pursue a more sophisticated policy in conformity with monastic traditions.<sup>3</sup> He was persuaded that the Lord had never intended him or his followers to walk by the way of science or eloquence.<sup>4</sup>

The "Father of the Minors" perceived that even such a worthy form of self expression as preaching might offer temptation to depart from simplicity and poverty. He besought preachers, clerks, and all others speaking publicly to be diligent in humiliating themselves in everything. They were not to boast or flatter themselves, nor were they to be puffed up inwardly at their eloquent speech or fine works.<sup>5</sup> He felt that involved, sophisticated reasoning and florid rhetoric were incompatible with the external profession of poverty. He warned against worldly wisdom and the prudence

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<sup>1</sup>And the source adds, "Volebat enim ipsos potius esse caritate bonos quam scientiae curiositate sciolos." - Spec. Perf., LXIX, 5.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., LXIX, 6; M S-Little, p. 115.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., LXVIII; M S-Little, p. 114.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., LXXI, 4-9. With due allowance for the possible bias against learning inserted in this source by later redactors of Franciscan writings, one may still sense in it something of Francis' yearning for the simple, unaffected life.

<sup>5</sup>I Reg., 17.



of the flesh. Evangelical poverty involved the renunciation of those mental appropriations whose possession led to competitive ambitions and the exaggerated appreciation of self.<sup>1</sup>

Francis' own preaching was spontaneous and free, albeit heavily freighted with Gospel messages. His teaching showed the wisdom of the world to be foolish "and turned it in a short time under the guidance of Christ, by the foolishness of preaching to the true wisdom of God." He spoke not in the plausible words of human wisdom, but according to the truth and power of the Holy Spirit. His words were devoid of flattery and blandishments.<sup>3</sup> He carried out his own advice that the preacher "must rather grow hot within than utter cold words outwardly."<sup>4</sup>

Francis was far from being an ignorant man, though he was not formally trained in any real sense. He had a passionate love for the words of the Lord and exhibited a profound insight into the truths of Scripture, frequently surpassing the more pretentious interpretations of less humble men.<sup>5</sup> For all theologians and those dispensing most holy divine words, Francis himself felt, and exhorted others to feel, a special affection. He desired that they be accorded special honor and

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<sup>1</sup>I Reg., 17.

<sup>2</sup>I Cel., 72, 89; Thode, op. cit., p. 26.

<sup>3</sup>Tres Soc., 54; Bon., XII, 1-7.

<sup>4</sup>II Cel., 163.

<sup>5</sup>Bon. XI, 1-2; Spec. Perf., LIII.

eneration as communicators of spirit and life.<sup>1</sup> He had little patience, however, with men "who only wish(ed) to know the text in order to appear wiser than others." He saw men sacrificing themselves to literalism through their desire to know verbally, and to interpret to others, the holy books whose spirit they refused to follow. On the contrary, those would be vivified by the spirit of the scriptures who would abandon textual literalism for an interpretation of word and example in accord with Divine intention.<sup>2</sup>

Francis seems to have admitted that there might be a rightful place in the order for a few books adapted to the requirements of needy brethren. If permitted, such books must give strong testimony for God; they must be edifying rather than beautiful.<sup>3</sup> Clerks were to possess only such books as were necessary to perform their office.<sup>4</sup> Francis did not wish the minister-general to "be a collector of books nor much intent on reading, lest he be taking from his office what he was spending by anticipation on study."<sup>5</sup>

Francis would gladly have substituted for the friars' desire of knowledge and books a desire for humility, simplicity, prayer, and poverty. All too many of his brethren were

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<sup>1</sup>Test., 3; II Cel., 163.

<sup>2</sup>Verb. Admon., 7.

<sup>3</sup>II Cel., 62; Spec. Perf., V; M S-Little, 84

<sup>4</sup>I Reg., 3.

<sup>5</sup>II Cel., 185; For further reactions to books Cf. Spec. Perf., III-V.

developing a propensity for learning most prejudicial to their vocation of humility and prayer.<sup>1</sup>

Bonaventura reports Francis' reply to those who inquired whether it were his will that the clerks already received into the order should devote themselves to the study of Holy Scripture. He declared that such was his will only so long as they followed the example of Christ, who prayed more than he read, and so long as they did not lose their zeal for prayer, nor study only in order that they might know how they ought to speak. He preferred, rather, that they should study that they might point out to others what they should do. He was desirous that his brethren should be learners of the Gospel and thus make progress in the knowledge of the truth; that they should grow in the purity of artlessness in order that they might not dissociate the simplicity of the dove from the wisdom of the serpent, which two the most excellent Teacher had conjoined with His blessed mouth.<sup>2</sup>

Learning, therefore, did not enter fundamentally into Francis' program for the realization of Poverty. He did not wish to promote its development within the order. He did permit clerks to study sacred science to the exclusion of the profane sciences on the condition that such study should be a means of sanctification.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Spec. Perf., LXXII, 1-3, 9.

<sup>2</sup>Bon., XI, 1.

<sup>3</sup>Gratien, op. cit., p. 96.

## B. Property and the Ideal of Poverty

Francis took care that the inner poverty, which was so basic in a life conformable to the poor Christ, should be reflected in the absolute renunciation of all outer propriety. He desired as much abstention as possible from even the use of things. Poverty of self and poverty of external possessions were mutually indispensable. Francis took seriously the Lord's counsel, "If thou wilt be perfect, go sell what thou hast and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven; and come follow me." Family, lands, and one's own life had, if necessary, to be given up by the followers of the Lord for his sake.<sup>1</sup>

In the second rule, as in the first, poverty was given an exalted place. Its followers were saluted as heirs and kings of the kingdom of heaven, poor in goods but exalted in virtue. The brethren of Francis heard the plea, "Let poverty be your heritage and lead you to the land of the living. Attach yourselves to her entirely, much loved brethren, and in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ never desire to possess anything under heaven."<sup>2</sup>

Though always considerate of the salvation of others, Francis longed above all things to be dissolved and to be with Christ.<sup>3</sup> He studied sedulously to be free of all worldly

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<sup>1</sup>I Reg., 1.

<sup>2</sup>II Reg., 6.

<sup>3</sup>According to I Cel., 71, Francis "... super omnia tamen desiderabat dissolvi, et esse cum Christo."



things, made himself insensible to outward affairs, and kept natural impulses in check. He occupied himself with God alone.<sup>1</sup> " .... wholly emptied of himself he rested long in the Saviour's wounds."<sup>2</sup>

Francis believed that Satan in his assault upon the human heart attempted to "blind it by the cares and business of the world, and to make his dwelling there ....."<sup>3</sup> Greed in men, as in animals, was an evil of portentous significance.<sup>4</sup> Aegidius illustrated the Poverello's attitude when he depreciated man's ceaseless striving for more possessions. He found men burrowing like moles amid lesser goods, ignorant, or oblivious of real treasures elsewhere.<sup>5</sup> Friar Giles<sup>6</sup> declared further that Francis was more pleased with the birds who made no provision for the future than with the ants who were ever gathering and storing provender.<sup>7</sup>

After all, Francis regarded God as the only true possessor. A life of poverty most truly expressed proper appreciation for, and confident trust in, the common benefactor and provider of all.<sup>8</sup> Blessed was the servant who attributed

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., 71.

<sup>2</sup>I Cel., 71; Cf. Tres Soc., 21.

<sup>3</sup>I Reg., 22.

<sup>4</sup>II Cel., 47.

<sup>5</sup>Glaser, op. cit., p. 54.

<sup>6</sup>"Giles" is the English equivalent of the Latin "Aegidius."

<sup>7</sup>The Little Flowers, p. 166.

<sup>8</sup>I Reg., 17.

all his goods to the Lord his God, not hiding his master's money by retaining something for himself.<sup>1</sup>

St. Francis himself eschewed property in order that he might the more fully possess everything in the Lord.<sup>2</sup> Having once renounced self and the world, he and his brethren needed but to be solicitous to follow the desire and will of God.<sup>3</sup> Upon one occasion he was importuned by the ministers to allow something to the brotherhood in common at least. He received assurance through prayer, however, that the Lord would provide things general and special for his family, whatever the increase, so long as it should hope in Him.<sup>4</sup> Francis feared that concessions to necessity would be followed by surrender to pleasure.<sup>5</sup>

Francis' biographer tells us that, "The Saint taught those coming to the order previously to give a bill of divorcement to the world, by first offering outwardly their goods, and then inwardly themselves to God. He admitted to the order none but those who had expropriated themselves and were keeping back nothing at all; both because of the word of

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<sup>1</sup>Verb. Admon., 19.

<sup>2</sup>I Cel., 44, "Nihil volebat proprietatis habere, ut omnia posset in Domino plenius possidere."

<sup>3</sup>I Reg., 22; Bon., II, 5; Tres Soc., 21.

<sup>4</sup>Spec. Perf., XIII; For the Savior's prohibition of property individually or in common see M S Little, 87.

<sup>5</sup>I Cel., 51 says, "Impossibile namque fore aiebat, satisfacere necessitati et voluptati non obedire."

the Holy Gospel and lest they should cause scandal by retaining a treasure-chest."<sup>1</sup> According to Francis' early intention, the postulant for admission to the order was to be carefully warned as to the type of life expected of him. Having been thus informed, he was to sell all his goods and distribute them to the poor.<sup>2</sup> Francis promptly discerned the motive of the man who, upon entering the order, gave up his property to relatives and reserved nothing for the poor. "Go thy way, brother fly," said Francis.<sup>3</sup> When a man presented himself for admission, the friars were to be careful not to become involved in his temporal affairs, but were to present him to their minister as soon as possible.<sup>4</sup>

The life of the early brethren was one of direst poverty in all things. At one time Francis and his brethren returned to a deserted hut near Assisi, "wherein, after the pattern of Holy Poverty, they lived in much toil and necessity, seeking to be refreshed rather with the bread of tears than of luxury."<sup>5</sup>

At a forsaken place near Orte, the brethren exulted greatly "at seeing and having nothing which might give them

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<sup>1</sup>II Cel., 80.

<sup>2</sup>I Reg., 2. If someone came who could not give away his goods without difficulty, but had the spiritual will to relinquish them, it was sufficient; Cf. II Reg., 2.

<sup>3</sup>II Cel., 81.

<sup>4</sup>I Reg., 2.

<sup>5</sup>Bon., IV, 3.

vain or carnal delight." Comforted by the lack of all worldly things, and finding delight in God alone, they vowed undying allegiance to poverty. Fearful, however, lest a protracted stay might entangle them in even the semblance of ownership, they removed thence.<sup>1</sup>

Francis was insistent that the friars be on guard wherever they were, in hermitage or elsewhere, against appropriating any dwelling or driving each other out. Whatever their surroundings and circumstances, they were to respect and honor one another without murmuring.<sup>2</sup> In their despisal of all things earthly, they maintained for each other a common affection rather than private love. Each made of himself a living sacrifice to his brother's need.<sup>3</sup>

In the early days when the friars were little known, some were suspected of being thieves and were frequently denied lodgings. Some found shelter in the porches of churches or houses.<sup>4</sup> At Rivo Torto "these most strenuous despisers of large and beautiful houses" found protection from storms of rain in an empty hovel. Their father in Christ declared that ".... One ascends to heaven quicker from a hovel than from a palace." They endured without complaint their quarters, which were so cramped that they could scarcely sit down. Francis wrote their names on the beams so that, desiring to rest or

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<sup>1</sup>I Cel., 35.

<sup>2</sup>I Reg., 7.

<sup>3</sup>I Cel., 39.

<sup>4</sup>Tres Soc., 38.



pray, each might know his own place. Here they remained for a time under the vigilant eye and rigid discipline of their mentor in poverty. They renounced everything, worked hard, and frequently contented themselves with a fare of turnips begged from people round about. Disturbed by the actions of a country dweller who thought they were about to establish ownership of their wretched quarters, Francis withdrew with his brethren to the Portiuncula, where stood the church of S. Mary formerly repaired by him.<sup>1</sup>

Before he would allow the brethren to live in any house, no matter how small, Francis had to have assurance that there was some owner to whom the property belonged, "for he always aimed at his sons' observing the laws of pilgrims - namely, to be gathered under another's roof, to pass onward peaceably, and to thirst after their native land." As transients and exiles, they had always to remember that nothing temporal merited their abiding attachment.<sup>2</sup> As pilgrims and strangers traversing the wilderness of this world, the brethren were instructed that they might, like Israelites indeed, "celebrate continuously as those poor in Spirit, the Lord's Passover, to wit, His departure from the world unto the Father."<sup>3</sup> To the last, the "Poverello" prohibited the friars to receive churches, poor dwellings, or any other places built

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<sup>1</sup>I Cel., 42-44; Tres Soc., 55.

<sup>2</sup>II Cel., 59; Bon., VII, 2; Tres Soc., 45, 59.

<sup>3</sup>Bon., VII, 9.

for them, unless conformable to the holy poverty prescribed in the rule. Theirs were the obligations of pilgrimage. To them they must be true.<sup>1</sup>

When one brother inadvertently referred to a certain cell as that of Francis, the latter refused to stay in it longer. The friar's unwitting statement was sufficient evidence for Francis that there was still in his group a latent sense of proprietorship, the malignant potentialities of which he must expose without further delay. He remembered that Christ had no cell in the wilderness. He was determined that his brethren, like himself, should have nothing either, in the way of property, though of course they could not live without the use of houses.<sup>2</sup>

Francis prescribed dwellings in keeping with the Gospel ideal. He specified poor habitations of wood, or wattle and dab, not stone. They were to be small and unpretentious throughout. Even such humble quarters surpassed the accommodations of the impoverished Christ, who had not where to lay his head.<sup>3</sup>

Displeased by the building of a great house constructed for the friars in his absence, the Saint began to tear it down. He was dissuaded from his purpose only when he learned

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<sup>1</sup>Test., 7.

<sup>2</sup>II Cel., 59; Spec. Perf., IX; Bon., VII; Legenda Antiqua, 50 Delorme ed. AFH, XV, 280.

<sup>3</sup>II Cel., 56; Spec. Perf., IX-X.

that the ownership pertained to the commune of Assisi.<sup>1</sup> Bona-ventura declares that Francis ordered the demolition of houses, or the removal of friars from them, upon finding such dwellings opposed to Gospel poverty, by reason of ownership or magnificence. Evangelical poverty was the foundation upon which his whole order rested; while poverty endured the Religion would stand firm; when poverty was overthrown the Religion would fall with it.<sup>2</sup>

Francis blamed the vicar for having a house built in which the brethren might say the Hours. He would not have this place, which was to be the form and example of the whole order, to be other than a good example of poverty.<sup>3</sup>

The "Spouse of Poverty" was unwilling "that the friars possess any places by right of ownership, in the houses, or churches, or gardens, or other things which they used, but should sojourn therein as travellers and pilgrims." He feared the danger to poverty of friars gathered in great numbers in their dwellings.<sup>4</sup> To observe poverty in a great multitude was most difficult, and poverty in all things was his intention from beginning to end.<sup>5</sup> He desired that the brethren build

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<sup>1</sup>Spec. Perf., VII.

<sup>2</sup>Bon., VII, 2.

<sup>3</sup>Spec. Perf., VIII.

<sup>4</sup>Spec. Perf., X, 5-7.

<sup>5</sup>Spec. Perf., X, 8, says, "Et haec fuit intentio ejus ab initio suae conversionis usque ad finem, ut paupertas in omnibus penitus servaretur."

little churches and lodgings, rather than great ones, in keeping with exemplary poverty and humility.<sup>1</sup>

Francis did not merely attack proprietorship and the enjoyment of fine quarters by the community. He even refused to accept for long the hospitality and luxurious accommodations accorded him as the guest of a cardinal. As a pattern for poor brethren he felt it incumbent upon him to shun palaces and "walk humbly among the humble in humble abodes." Thus he would invigorate those that bore poverty by himself bearing the same.<sup>2</sup>

Not only did Francis interdict fine houses, but he also abhorred select furniture. He wanted nothing in tables or vessels which might remind him of the world, to the end that everything might sing of pilgrimage and exile.<sup>3</sup> Everything suggestive of stability and attractiveness in furnishings symbolized satisfaction with material things; it diffused the subtle magnetism of ingratiating ease. The seductive appeal of comfortable quarters lured the soul from spiritual adventure and led to its final acceptance of the "status quo." Yet so great was the poverty of the early brethren in beds and couches that those who had a few torn rags over some straw deemed it a marriage bed.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Cf. Spec. Perf., IX-X for further details as to Francis' ideas on appropriate buildings and their construction.

<sup>2</sup>Bon., VI, 10.

<sup>3</sup>II Cel., 60.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., 63.

In clothing, likewise, Francis gave the example of rigid poverty. He was rich in a tunic, cord, and drawers only, being "warmed inwardly by the divine fire rather than outwardly by bodily covering." Extra garments and soft raiment were most reprehensible except in cases of real necessity.<sup>1</sup> Postulants for admission and full fledged members had carefully specified clothing which was uniformly poor and subject to repeated patching.<sup>2</sup>

Francis proscribed the possession of animals and the riding of horses except in cases of infirmity and other great necessity. No such manifestations of ease and power were to be countenanced.<sup>3</sup>

Francis found in property the great obstacle to the higher possession of human fraternity, peace, and love of God. The goods of earth he regarded as a loan by the divine proprietor for man's use in common. To put in a claim of private ownership was to seek a monopoly of God's bounty and to usurp the right of administering resources which God alone could distribute in equity.<sup>4</sup> To assert exclusive claim to anything was to rob him who in need had at least an equal right to it.<sup>5</sup> Francis insisted that things provided for himself, even though they were life necessities, should be given up to poor folk

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., 55, 69.

<sup>2</sup>I Reg., 2.

<sup>3</sup>I Reg., 15; II Reg., 3; Felder, op. cit., p. 180.

<sup>4</sup>Nicholson, op. cit., p. 138.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., pp. 139-140.



whom he met, not only as largesse but even as things rightfully belonging to them. To keep a cloak when another needed it more was theft.<sup>1</sup> Coming across a poor man Francis gave him his own mantle as if he were but returning it to its proper owner. "For," he said, "we received it only as a loan, until we should come upon one poorer than ourselves."<sup>2</sup>

The only things which Francis regarded as really worth having were those which the heart alone could possess, which money could not buy, and which private possession could not encompass." Such were the purified affections of poor men, the heady intoxication of natural beauty, and the consuming ecstasy of divine love. Things of but fleeting moment, such as temporal wealth and material power, were subject always to the cupidity and avarice of others. To possess such property was to be always ready for the defense of one's rights by armed force or legal process, both of which rendered the love of God and neighbor a sorry fiction.<sup>3</sup> Poverty alone could defeat cupidity and avarice.<sup>4</sup> How great was the torture of a rich man who, having prostituted all honor and justice to the acquisition of gain, had to leave his accumulations behind him

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<sup>1</sup>Bon., VIII, 5; Spec. Perf., XXX.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., XXX, XXXIII.

<sup>3</sup>Antoine De Serent, "L'Ame Franciscaine," in the Archivum Franciscanum Historicum (Quaracchi, 1915), VIII, 464; Sabatier, Franciscan Essays, p. 6; Alencon, op. cit., p. 295; Salvatorelli, op. cit., p. 123.

<sup>4</sup>Verb. Admon., 27.

at death to those who cursed him for not leaving more.<sup>1</sup>

Francis could not reconcile love with the prosecution of selfish rights. He was convinced that, for him at least, charity and property-holding were incompatible. He believed in the ultimate antagonism of selfish propriety and the perfection of life after the Gospel pattern. He probably sensed how cursed was his age with the gainful spirit. He did all he could, by example and teaching, to liberate men from the bondage of false values, and to allay their feverish thirst for material possession.

However, Francis never attacked private ownership as it existed within society at large, nor did he assault the social institutions which rested upon it. He respected social conventions with regard to the rights of ownership insofar as these rights pertained to men outside his own fraternity. He encouraged his friars to gather the bounty and live in the humble dwellings regulated by the conventional proprietorship of others. He did not thereby concede the ultimate validity of all the economic pretensions of society. On the other hand he did not set himself up as a judge and comprehensive reformer of the existing social system. He regarded rich and poor as brothers, created alike by a common father. He esteemed the rich and great as the Lords and Masters of himself and brethren. They aided the friars in their program of penitence

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<sup>1</sup>Epist. ad fideles, 12, Boehmer, op. cit., pp. 55-56.

and renunciation by contributing to them in their necessity. The brethren were not to scorn those living delicately, for God was able to justify them.<sup>1</sup>

For himself and his friars, who attempted to scale the heights of perfection, total poverty was demanded; he made no such demand of the third order, or of the world at large. A social rebel and systematic reformer of social institutions he never was. He did strive to develop in all hearts a truer appreciation of the inner riches of poverty in Christ.<sup>2</sup>

#### C. Money and the Ideal of Poverty

Francis, who despised all things that were of the world, execrated money above everything else. Perhaps he saw in it the symbol of those grasping propensities and unprincipled transactions so perversive alike of human personality and divine standards. He warned his followers to fly from money as from the devil himself; they were to evaluate it as they would excrement. A brother who so much as touched some money was forced to remove it with his mouth, and put it on the dung heap outside.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Holzappel, op. cit., pp. 15-16; Tres Soc., 58, 45.

<sup>2</sup>It is Sabatier's conviction that, "St. Francis no more condemned the family or property than Jesus did; he simply saw in them ties from which the apostle, and the apostle alone, needs to be free." - Life, p. 266. Cf. Holzappel, op. cit., pp. 130-131; Salvatorelli, op. cit., pp. 123, 139; Dubois, op. cit., p. 185.

<sup>3</sup>II Cel., 65; Cf. also II Cel., 68; Bon. VII, 5; Spec. (Footnote concluded on following page)

Perhaps Francis with his flair for the symbolic did not overemphasize the psychological significance of that which was destined to become for so many men the sine qua non of human exertion and a leading factor in the tragic confusion of values. It is quite likely that money connoted for him that cumulative power wielded by men, untouched by human suffering, who profited without labor from the desperate toil of those whom they victimized.<sup>1</sup> His anathema of money and of the evils to which it gave rise was in striking contrast to the current solicitude for gain and the growing organization of machinery for procuring it. He was probably unaware of the deep-lying historical processes which rested behind and within the transformation in trade, commerce, and general economic activity. He propagated an ideal which sought to restore man and his welfare to the center of human attention, from which the growing craze for economic profit was thrusting them.<sup>2</sup>

Francis could hardly have been ignorant of the havoc which capitalistic ambitions had wrought in current monastic orders. Whether or not he attacked directly the current institutions for procuring and dispensing money, his whole emphasis was a criticism upon the essential futility of the acquisitive spirit. He could not bear to see men become mere

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Perf., XIV; MS-Little, 88, etc., for dire results accompanying contacts of the friars with money.

<sup>1</sup>Schmitz, op. cit., pp. 63-64.

<sup>2</sup>Glaser, op. cit., p. 55.

instruments for the facilitation of material profit.<sup>1</sup>

Whatever his convictions upon the defects of social institutions, St. Francis opposed money as he did other property, because it was a great obstacle in the way of imitating Christ.<sup>2</sup> The Saviour had warned against malice, avarice, the solitudes of this world, and the cares of this life. Therefore Francis placed a flat prohibition upon any friar's taking, receiving, or even causing to be received, any coin or money, whether for the purchase of books or clothes, or as payment for work, on any occasion whatever, except in the case of absolute necessity for sick brothers.

Money was to be valued no more highly than dust or stones. Francis advised greatest care lest they who had left everything lose the kingdom of heaven for so small a thing. Should a friar pick up and appropriate money as coin, except in the case of the above named necessity of the sick, the brethren were to ostracize him as a thief and a false brother until he did penance.

Friars were not to seek or cause others to seek for alms or money for a house or place, nor were they to accompany persons begging in this way. Friars might beg alms for lepers in case of absolute necessity. But money was ever to be a cause of great fear; all friars were to avoid searching the

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid.; Coulton, Five Centuries, II, 2; Schnürer, Kirche u. Kultur, II, 347.

<sup>2</sup>Salvatorelli, op. cit., pp. 92-93.



world for any filthy gain.<sup>1</sup> For work done the brethren might receive things needful, but no money.<sup>2</sup> Francis reiterated his statement that friars and ministers were never to receive money for themselves or others. If in need they might, like other poor, receive things necessary for the body, but no money.<sup>3</sup>

The office of minister-general was to be filled by an incumbent who would execrate money, the chief cause of corruption in the profession of the followers of poverty. A man thus placed at the head of a poor order could not well afford to make wrong use of treasure chests. A little book, a box of pens, and a seal were to suffice for him, even as the brethren were to be content with a box of pens and a seal.<sup>4</sup>

#### D. Labor and the Ideal of Poverty

Francis' devotion to poverty necessitated a life of labor with the studied improvement of every moment of time. He thought it a grave fault "not to be doing some good thing, and judged that not to be always going forward was to be going back."<sup>5</sup>

The Saint's industrious habits left him little sympathy for the idle. He declared that the lukewarm who neglected to apply themselves earnestly to some occupation would soon

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<sup>1</sup>I Reg., 8; Tres Soc., 35, 45.

<sup>2</sup>I Reg., 7.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., 2; II Reg., 4.

<sup>4</sup>II Cel., 185.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., 159.

be spewed out of the mouth of God. Francis himself worked with his hands, carefully hoarding the precious time. It was his desire that all the brethren be employed. They were to learn crafts if they knew none already. He wished this in order that the fraternity might be less burdensome to men, and that their hearts and tongues might not be captured by the evils of idleness. The gain or hire of labor was not to be subject to the determination of the laborer, but to that of the warden or community.<sup>1</sup>

The brethren who knew how to work were to practice their former trades, if this could be done with convenience and without endangering their souls. Francis referred to the prophetic injunction to eat of the labor of the hands, and cited the apostolic decree "If any man will not work neither let him eat." Of course the friars were to have the needed tools for their labors.

Francis seized every opportunity to safeguard his sons against the idleness which the devil found so conducive to his purposes. He desired that constant employment at some occupation profitable for the soul, together with prayer at all seasons, should find a vital place in the Franciscan schedule of spiritual development.<sup>2</sup>

The Poverello's last will and testament emphasized the need of labor which he continued by example to commend to all

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., 160-161; I Cel., 39; Spec. Perf., LXXV.  
<sup>2</sup>I Reg., 7; Spec. Perf., XXIV, IX, 17.

men. All the brethren were to labor at some work in keeping with honesty. Those not knowing how were to learn, not in order to receive payment for their work, but for a good example and to banish idleness. The brethren were to receive a recompense of needed things, but no money for their work. When they failed to receive payment for their toil they were to have access to the table of the Lord by begging alms from door to door.<sup>1</sup>

### E. Mendicancy and the Ideal of Poverty

The evidence is indubitable that Francis intended his brethren to earn their livelihood by their own labor, depending on alms in case of necessity.<sup>2</sup>

Mendicancy filled a legitimate place in the life of Francis' poor, humble men.<sup>3</sup> It was indispensable as a means to self conquest and the perfect imitation of Christ's poverty. It was sometimes a most welcome resource when the dues of labor were not forthcoming. However, the extreme lengths to which mendicancy was pushed in later Franciscan history were wholly out of keeping with the founder's wishes. Nothing was farther from his mind than the imposition of a heavy bur-

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<sup>1</sup>Test., 5; I Reg., 7.

<sup>2</sup>The rule of 1221, after authorizing the brethren to receive things needful, but no money, for their work, continues, "Et, cum necesse fuerit, vadant pro elemosina sicut alii pauperes," - I Reg., 7; Cf. I Reg., 9.

<sup>3</sup>Cf. Conform., 86 S.

den upon people, many of whom eked out a precarious existence.<sup>1</sup> On the economic side Francis was a worker much more than a mendicant.<sup>2</sup> Sabatier declares that "he never dreamed of creating a mendicant order, he created a laboring order." To work was the rule, to beg was the exception, though the latter was by no means dishonorable.<sup>3</sup> Getting their bread by labor when they could, the early brethren were not ashamed when hungry and without other means, to beg for it as the wages of spiritual service.<sup>4</sup>

Francis called upon his friars to follow the humility and poverty of Christ, rejoicing in their fellowship with the poor and the weak, with lepers and wayside beggars. When it was necessary, therefore, the brethren were to go for alms.<sup>5</sup> This they were to do without shame, inasmuch as Christ, "the ever-blessed Virgin and His disciples lived on alms." Shame suffered by the friars from those refusing them alms would but lead to greater honor at the tribunal of the Lord Jesus Christ. The brethren were taught to see in alms a heritage and right due the poor, and gained to them by the Christ. Alms were not

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<sup>1</sup>Spec. Perf., XIII, LXXV; II Cel., 160-161; Dubois, op. cit., p. 182; Knox-Little, op. cit., pp. 148-149.

<sup>2</sup>Alençon, op. cit., pp. 294-295.

<sup>3</sup>Sabatier, Life, p. 121; Sabatier, Franciscan Essays, p. 6; Coulton, Christ, St. Francis and To-day, p. 81; O. Hartman, The Ideals of Asceticism (New York, 1924), p. 207; L. LeMonnier, Histoire de Saint François d'Assisi (7 ed., Paris, 1922), pp. 178, 179. For marked emphasis upon mendicancy see Cuthbert, "St. Francis and Poverty," in Franciscan Essays, pp. 25-30.

<sup>4</sup>J. Herkless, Francis and Dominic and The Mendicant Orders (New York, 1901), p. 34.

<sup>5</sup>I Reg., 9, "Et cum necesse fuerit, vadant pro elemosinis."

a shameful infringement of others' prerogatives, but the natural right of the children of Providence in God.

The friars, in begging alms, were giving their benefactors the opportunity to experience the joy and blessedness which attend giving.<sup>1</sup> Francis declared that the Lesser Brethren had been lent to the world at this latest hour to enable the elect to fulfil in them that which would elicit from the judge the commendation: "That which ye have done to one of my Lesser Brethren ye have done to me."<sup>2</sup>

Francis made mendicancy a secondary, though upon occasion a legitimate, means for the procuring of livelihood. The primary end of mendicancy, so far as he was concerned, seems to have been the development of proper humility, and the imitation of Christ without shame in his life of poverty. Francis "made use of alms gathered from door to door much more willingly than of such as had been offered. He declared that to be ashamed of begging was hostile to salvation, but affirmed that that shame in begging which does not draw back the foot was holy."<sup>3</sup> He was not satisfied that the friars should merely accept alms offered without solicitation. House-to-house begging alone could bring conquest of self and the following of Christ unashamed.

Only gradually had Francis conquered his shame at beg-

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<sup>1</sup>I Reg., 9; II Reg., 6.

<sup>2</sup>II Cel., 71; Bon., VII, 8.

<sup>3</sup>II Cel., 71.



ging, but when he had done so he found the bread begged for the love of God to be veritable angel's food. Meanwhile, all his former loathing changed to a sense of sweetness. Despising worldly repute, he prepared to mount gradually the steps to Gospel perfection.<sup>1</sup>

For some time Francis disciplined himself and spared his brethren by seeking alms alone. But, weakened in body and apprehensive of their distaste for begging, he finally called them to their high duty and privilege. He reminded them that the Son of God, who for their sakes made himself poor in the world, was nobler than they. They had for his sake chosen the way of poverty and ought not be ashamed to seek alms. It was hardly fitting for the heirs of the Kingdom to blush for the earnest of their heavenly inheritance. Shame was becoming rather to those who retained something without having final right to it. Through poverty the brethren entered into the heritage of the sole proprietor of all. This privilege of begging, which was now theirs, would one day be avidly sought by many noble and wise men yet to join the company.<sup>2</sup>

It was Francis' custom when dining with a great lord to seek first for scraps of bread among neighboring houses, which remnants of food he then brought with him to the table. When questioned as to his bizarre conduct, "he answered that

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<sup>1</sup>Tres Soc., 10, 22, 24; Bon., I, 6, VII, 8; II Cel., 13, 14.

<sup>2</sup>II Cel., 74; Spec. Perf., XVIII; Bon., VI, 7; Nicholson, op. cit., p. 188.

he would not relinquish an enduring inheritance for a fief granted for an hour. 'It is poverty,' said he, 'that appoints the heirs and kings of the kingdom of heaven and not your false riches.'<sup>1</sup>

When the future pope, Gregory IX, remonstrated with Francis for putting him to shame in his own house by first collecting alms and then distributing them to the guests assembled at table, Francis replied, "I have rather shown you honor, since I have honored a greater Lord, for God is well pleased with poverty and with that especially which is voluntary begging. For I have a royal dignity and a preeminent nobility to follow that Lord, who, though He was rich, for our sakes became poor." The sources declare that the bishop experienced great edification from this pointed speech.<sup>2</sup>

At one time Francis had occasion to express appreciation to a brother who joyously celebrated his return with alms. Francis kissed his shoulder and blessed him for his ready departure, his humble search, and his joyous return.<sup>3</sup>

Francis stressed mendicancy, therefore, as a vital part of the Gospel program of poverty. Through it, he and the brethren sought a livelihood when their labors secured for them but inadequate provision. He was never a thief, however, in getting or using alms beyond need. He always took

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<sup>1</sup>II Cel., 72.

<sup>2</sup>II Cel., 73; Bon., VII, 7; Spec. Perf., XXIII.

<sup>3</sup>II Cel., 76.

less than he needed out of fear of defrauding other poor folks of their share. To retain that of which another had need was theft.<sup>1</sup> To ask men for reasonable alms for the love of God was, however, to request but a fair share of that which God alone possessed, and to which the man who asked had equal right with the man who had. By their own labor, Francis and his brethren earned the right to partake of God's common bounty. By their spiritual service and edifying example, they merited such support as their work did not furnish.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Spec. Perf., XII; Nicholson, op. cit., p. 148; MS-Little, 86.

<sup>2</sup>Nicholson, op. cit., p. 149.









